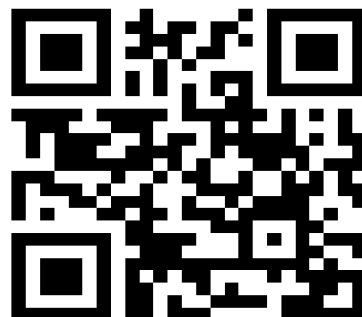







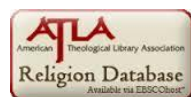



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An Analytical Study of the Implications of the Gesture of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW)

Abstract

This research explores the significance of nonverbal communication through the gestures of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) as preserved in Hadith. It highlights the systematic approach taken by the Companions (may Allah be pleased with them) to document these gestures, emphasizing their role in understanding the meanings and implications of the Prophet's teachings. The study aims to establish the communicative and educational value of these gestures and their relevance in contemporary pedagogical practices.

Introduction

Communication is a complex and multifaceted process that involves the exchange of information, ideas, and messages between individuals, groups, and organizations. It is of two types: verbal (of words) and non-verbal (without words). While verbal communication, such as spoken and written language, plays a crucial role in conveying meaning, non-verbal communication is equally important in shaping the communication process. Non-verbal cues, including body language, facial expressions, tone of voice, physical proximity, and other visual and auditory signals, convey emotions, attitudes, and intentions, and can either reinforce or contradict verbal messages¹.

Non-verbal communication is considered more reliable than verbal because it expresses our emotions more truthfully. Different non-verbal cues have their diversified roles such as, Facial expressions convey emotions such as happiness, sadness, anger, and fear. These expressions are often universal across cultures. Gestures include movements of the hands, arms, or other parts of the body to convey messages. Common gestures include waving, pointing, and using fingers to indicate numbers. Paralinguistic refers to vocal elements that accompany speech, such as tone, pitch, loudness, and rate of speaking. These elements can convey emotions and attitudes. Body language includes the way we sit, stand, and move. Posture can indicate confidence, openness, or defensiveness. Proxemics involves the use of personal space in communication. The distance we maintain from others can convey intimacy, aggression, or formality. Eye contact is a crucial aspect of nonverbal communication. It can indicate interest, attention, and involvement. Avoiding eye contact can suggest discomfort or disinterest. Touch is a powerful form of nonverbal communication. It can convey affection, comfort, or dominance. The context and relationship between individuals often determine the appropriateness of touch. Our appearance, including clothing, hairstyle, and grooming, can communicate a lot about our personality, status, and intentions. Objects and images we use, such as jewelry, accessories, and even the design of our personal spaces, can convey messages about our identity and preferences.²

The significance of non-verbal communication extends beyond its role in conveying emotions and attitudes. Non-verbal cues can also

influence perception, build relationships, and convey power and status³(Hall, 1959) , ⁴(Mehrabian, 1971). For example, maintaining eye contact can convey confidence and sincerity, while avoiding eye contact can suggest dishonesty or lack of confidence. Similarly, standing with an open posture can convey friendliness and approachability, while crossing one's arms can suggest defensiveness or resistance.

Despite its importance, non-verbal communication is often overlooked or underestimated in communication research and practice. This oversight can lead to misunderstandings, miscommunication, and conflict, particularly in intercultural or international communication contexts where non-verbal cues can vary significantly across cultures ⁵(Ting-Toomey, 1999).

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) employed various pedagogical methods, including nonverbal communication, to convey his teachings effectively. Nonverbal communication constitutes a significant part of human interaction, categorized into four types: examination of the Prophet's gestures, which serve as an integral component of his communicative approach.

The research paper is focused on the aspect of the Prophet Muhammad's (SAW) body language, specifically how his physical gestures and movements were preserved by the Companions (Sahabah) and how they helped in understanding the meanings and teachings conveyed through them. The way the Companions (may Allah be pleased with them) transmitted this aspect of the Prophet's conduct with caution, precision, and beauty can be gauged from the fact that when narrating a hadith involving any physical gesture of the Prophet (SAW), they would recount it precisely at the moment when it was physically performed. For example, there is a narration:

عن عبد الرحمن الأعرج أخبر عن أبي هريرة أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: (في الجمعة ساعة - وقبض أطراف أصابعه، وهو يقللها - لا يسئله فيها مؤمن شيئاً إلا أعطى سوله.⁶

"Narrated by 'Abdur-Rahman al-A'raj, who heard from Abu Hurayrah: The Messenger of Allah (SAW) said, 'On Friday there is a portion of time, during which a Muslim asks for anything but that it is granted to him.' And He (SAW) made a gesture by folding his fingers and showing how brief this time is."

In this narration, the Prophet (SAW) speaks of a special moment on Friday during which a believer's supplications are granted. Along with this, He (SAW) made a gesture with his fingers to indicate the brief nature of this moment.

This narration is transmitted only by one companion of the Prophet , Abu Hurayrah (May Allah be pleased with him). However, there are six different chains of transmission of this hadith from Abu Hurayrah, including from narrators such as Abu Salamah, 'Ata', Muhammad ibn Ziyad, Muhammad ibn Sirin, 'Abdur-Rahman al-A'raj, and others. As a result , there are multiple narrations in the second generation of the followers (Tabi'een) that extend and expand through further chains of transmission.

The focus of this research is to examine how the physical gestures of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW), which were an integral part of his communication, were recorded and transmitted by the Companions, and how these gestures helped in clarifying and deepening the understanding of his teachings. The meticulous way in which the Companions preserved both his verbal and non-verbal communication serves as a crucial aspect of Islamic tradition. The careful recounting of His gestures alongside His words provides a more complete and nuanced understanding of His guidance for the Ummah (community).

In this context, it has been observed that describing the varying descriptions of a single gesture made by the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) during His speech, as narrated by different transmitters (rawi). Despite all the narrators reporting the same gesture, there are subtle differences in how the gesture is described. By examining the various chains of transmission, three distinct variations of the gesture can be identified in the above mentioned hadith.

Variation 1:

This variation describes the Prophet (SAW) making a gesture with his fingers to indicate the briefness of the moment:

قبض اطراف اصابعه و هو يقللها.⁷

1. **First interpretation:** The Prophet (SAW) brought the tips of all five fingers together.
2. **Second interpretation:** The thumb was included, and the four fingers were brought together to close any gap between them.

As shown in the figure:



Variation 2:

In this version, the description of the gesture is more detailed, indicating different stages of movement:

الصق اصابعه بعضها الى بعض وحناها شيئاً ثم قبضها ولم يبسطها⁸
 "وضع انملة على بطن الوسطى والخنصر"⁹

1. **First:** The finger tips remained apart.
2. **Second:** The four fingers came together from the middle joint to the palm, but the thumb was not initially involved.
3. **Third:** The hand was moved from the wrist, with the fingers coming

together.

4. **Fourth:** Once the fingers were fully together, they were kept in that position without separating them again during the narration.



5. **Fifth:** The thumb was placed at the start of both middle and ring finger. As shown in the figure:

Variation 3:

This variation involves the gesture being made with the palm, not just the fingers:

واشار بكفه كانه يقللها¹⁰
قال بكفه يقللها يزهدا مرتين¹¹

1. **First:** The gesture was made with the palm, rather than the fingers, to indicate the brevity of the moment.
2. **Second:** Although the palm was the focus, the fingers were positioned in such a way as to reinforce the meaning of brevity (as indicated in the first two variations).
3. **Third:** The gesture was made twice.
4. **Fourth:** Alternatively, the gesture might have been made once, but the hand was moved twice to emphasize the point.

As shown in the figure:



Analysis:

These variations illustrate the nuanced ways in which the Companions (may Allah be pleased with them) perceived and transmitted the physical gestures of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). The gesture, though similar in essence, was described slightly different by various narrators, reflecting either the precise movements or their interpretation of the Prophet's actions.

- **Variation 1** focuses mainly on the fingers and their position, specifically their closure to symbolize the shortness of the time.
- **Variation 2** provides a more dynamic description of the hand and fingers, including a slight bending and a more deliberate movement of the wrist, indicating a more detailed observation of the Prophet's gesture.
- **Variation 3** shifts the focus to the palm, demonstrating how non-verbal communication can be carried out with both the fingers and the entire hand. The repetition of the gesture emphasizes its significance.

Conclusion

It is quite natural that every human being has his/her own unique filter of mind. An incident is perceived differently. Sometimes due to barriers in communication, a message can be distorted. This endeavor finds that due to difference of understanding or perception, the companions of Prophet SAW recorded the same incident but with their own insights. These subtle differences in the transmission of the gesture highlight the attention to detail and the careful preservation of the Prophet's actions by the Companions. While the essential meaning of the gesture — pointing to the brevity of the special moment on Friday — remains the same, these varying descriptions offer a deeper understanding of how the Prophet's physical language was transmitted and understood. It also manifests that the gestures of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) were an essential part of his communication approach. They complemented his verbal messages, adding depth and emotion while conveying key ethical teachings. Whether through hand movements, facial expressions, or body language, his gestures bridged the gap between his words and actions, creating a living example of Islamic principles for his followers. These physical cues were a powerful tool in imparting lessons on faith, mercy, humility, and justice. Understanding these gestures is crucial to fully grasping the Prophet's unique communication style and his profound impact on his companions and the broader Muslim community.

In brief about sixty ahadees can be presented to explain deeply the gestures off the holy prophet (PBUH) categories as:

- (i) Gestures with fingers of single hand(one ,two or more).
- (ii) Gestures with finger of both two hands.
- (iii) Gestures with hand/hands ,mouth, fore shoulders, heart, neck, tongue, nose, etc. (iv) Gestures with different articles like pebbles, sticks, lines on ground etc.

Keywords :

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- (i) **Kinesics**: the study of the way in which certain body movements and [gestures](#) serve as a form of [non- verbal](#) communication.
 - (ii) **Haptics**: the subsystem of non-language communication which conveys meaning through physical contact.
 - (iii) **Proxemics**: the study of personal space and the degree of separation that individuals maintain between each other in social situations.
 - (iv) **Artifacts**: the study of how physical objects (clothing, jewelry) and the way people carry themselves can convey nonverbal messages.

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- 7 الجامع لابن وهب ت رفعت فوزى عبدالمطلب ، ج 1 ص 133
- 8 مصنف عبد الرزاق الصنعاني، رقم الحديث: 5572، ج 3، ص 260
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